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THE COTTAGE INDUSTRIES OF INDIA

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY V. R. CHITRA

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ON BEAUTY

Nicholas Roerich

IN our growing understanding of true realities, we begin to comprehend how conventional are many of the so-called “records of our knowledge.” Sometimes even the greatest historical events must be accepted only with true discretion. For instance, the first pages of Russian history open with an account of how the three brothers, Rurik, Sineus and Truvor, Varghins princes, were invited by the Slavs to rule them. Often men wondered at the strange fact that brothers were entirely wiped out of history. But if and trusted guard. Thus one sees how the historical fact about Rurik’s coming with his family and trusted strange personal names, unfamiliar either in Russian the truth must be searchingly corroborated. There have been some mythical stories and romances Solomon, and from the popular conception everyone knows that it was written by Solomon himself. Egyptian Princesses; even such commentators as Origen and Jerome confirm this assertion. Thus in this search for truth one sees that beauty is not thereby desecrated.

Similar discrepancies occur about rulers in the endless history of our planet. Sometimes we are confronted with quite opposing characters when we compare the conventional sources of a ruler’s career with the original roots of the story. Take, for instance, the official conception of the great Akbar, and compare it with the highest conception given by a more scientific but less known chronicler. Hence, how much discrimination must be projected, not for the destruction but for the purification of the truth.

Often it is the legend which is confirmed by facts. For instance one can cite the following example. When you are going through the wonderful fairyland of the Indian Pueblos in America; when you hear the wonderful songs and profound ceremonial dances; when you examine the household and the everyday utensils of Indian life; when you regard their feet bound in white linen, and the peculiar headdress and ornamented shirts; and when, finally, you see the rich fantasy of the totem poles, then, you have the feeling that you are somewhere in Western Russia or Siberia, if you know these lands. Solomon in quite different continents, under quite different circumstances of life, do such striking similarities arise. Thus, this one visible evidence strengthens the old legend that several Indian tribes migrated from Siberia to Alaska. One can appreciate that this legend is so real and so simple that nothing can be said against it, especially when you see the aborigines.

Last year during my journey in Santa Fe, Dr. Hewitt, Director of the Santa Fe Museum, wanted to have some of my paintings on exhibition. With special purpose I promised to give him a real Russian painting; and I gave him one which has for its subject a sacred dance around some old Russian idols, some details of which I have taken from real Russian excavations. Later, I realised how well my purpose had worked out for during the exhibition I was asked many times if I had been somewhere in Alaska or in the Indian Pueblos, because this subject, so characteristic of East Russia or Siberia, was found so similar to the subject of life among the American Indians. And the old idol of Russia was constantly compared to the Alaskan totem pole.

I am not familiar in linguistic matters, but I think that even in language some peculiar reminiscences could be found between the two continents. As an artist, however, I can assert that pictorial and musical similarities tell me quite definitely that this old legend is not an invention of fantasy but an old fragment of truth. And through many fragments of truth, so simple and so near to us, are forgotten and misunderstood.

Now, at the moment of revaluation of our old standards, we must take up fearlessly the revision of our official scientific sources. Certainly, this must be with the one condition that we shall eschew prejudice. Prejudice, one of our most dangerous enemies of life, must be destroyed with all the power of the spirit. And then quite easily the fragments of truth can be woven together into a new and wonderful texture. And this carpet shall help us to fly from the real past to the real future, and we shall discern that even the legendary flying tale of all life can be easily manifested to our average human brain if it be without prejudice.

Another experience against prejudice is before my eyes. Not only in the workmanship, but even in beauty are we sowing prejudice by going to the limits of specialisation. A strange aspect indeed is this of art, when the painter can remain ignorant of music and the musician be silent before a statue. Thus in the Master Institute of United Arts, New York, when we pronounced some unifying word about the different branches of art we were confronted by shock and surprise that any useful and vital connection should exist between the different branches of art. And yet already in the most natural way, by casting out prejudice and facing the matter without hypocrisy, we already see that this unity of art is not only an ideal matter, but also can be used in our daily life, in that very life where to-day so many crimes are committed and so many deplorable brutalities and hypocrisies show themselves.

Thus from many aspects of our life, we may find numberless examples of the same sort. Every sincere artist, and every sincere scientist can give you many worthy assertions of this. And this searching of truth against conventionalism, against hypocrisy, must be the watchword of our days, for already we see a real new generation arising, ready not only for struggle but for victory. Only truth! Only results! Now must we expose another of our greatest prejudices. In a recent serious article we found the following prejudiced classification: “Education, Sociology, Politics, Religion, Science (Medicina included), Art, Technology”. One may well ask why technology is not science or why sociology and politics are placed before religion and, finally, why the place of art is between medicine and technology.

“This position of art must be discussed, because only prejudice can place Beauty with technology. The place of art has been frequently misunderstood. It has even been written that art is but a secondary manifestation of Divinity. If it means professional skillfulness, certainly it is not secondary, but a still lower manifestation. But Trismegist Beauty—the all embracing, all creative, all convincing power—must be placed in the right place. Without exaggeration we can assert the significance of Beauty. We must feel that the great Teacher will come not only in Love and Truth, but radiant with Beauty. In Beauty only are all the diverse spirits united,